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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the position of women in today's society through an analysis of their role within the power structure. To do this, top hierarchical positions in the U.S. corporate, political, and military structures were analyzed for the years 1958, 1965, and 1972. The industrial companies listed by Fortune Magazine as the 10 largest in sales and assets made up the corporate sample, and a listing of each of the companys' offices was obtained. A total of 15 companies and 1,074 positions were examined. The military sample included major positions in the Defense Department plus the major service commanders. Positions in the three branches of the federal government made up the political power sample. Results indicate that despite claims that women "have come a long way," the position of women within the "power elite" did not change during the period studied. (Author/HMV)

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THE UNCHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN

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THE UNCHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN

by
Melody Kay Lemmon

> Contemporary sociologists generally define a minority as a group of people - differentiated from others in the same society by race, nationality, religion, or language - who both think of themselves as a differentiated group and are thought of by others as a differentiated group with negative connotations. Further, they are relatively lacking in power and hence, are subjected to certain exclusions, discriminations, and other differential treatment (Rose, 1968:365).

Minorities are subject to differential treatment due primarily to their lack of power and limited access to it. Since they are also denied full integration, minorities tend to join reform factions or parties in an attempt to improve their lot by a turnover of elites within the existing society. But do these "elites" actually relinquish their power? How can power be used to empirically examine the stratification system and minority groups?

According to Weber, power is the "probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests " (1947:152). Weber continued without stating whether actual or potential realization of one's will is the criterion of power. "Potential for control" may be harder to examine empirically than "actual control". "Potential" is a much broader theoretical construct, a component of which is influence, an even more evasive aspect of power. Power as potential does not use behavioral evidence but rather employs

the same indexes that determine economic and prestige positions. A presumption is that "power is co-extensive with class and status" (Polsby, 1963:103-4).

Thus, the components of stratification are analytically separable but empirically are often hopelessly entangled. Yet power, as Lenski maintains, is the fundamental basis of stratification. "The distribution of privilege and prestige seem largely determined by the distribution of power at least in those societies in which a significant surplus is produced" (1966:75). Therefore, those persons who stand in similar positions with respect to some form of power and resulting privilege and prestige, comprise a class. Proceeding from the Lenski perspective, power might legitimately be utilized as the single criterion to study stratification empirically. This study examines the position of women in the stratification system through an analysis of their role within the power structure.

Power and influence refer to relationships between persons and/or groups. D'Antonio and Form suggest two basic subclasses of power: formal, authority based on position; and informal, influence manifested in willingness to obey those who lack formal authority (1965:11). Both the formal and informal classes of power may be examined through the decision/issue analysis approach most often employed by political scientists. This method, however, ignores both the non-controversial exercises of power and the potential for power which a positional or reputational approach may analyze.

According to Freeman and associates, "most versions of each approach represent only vernier adjustments of the same device and thus, can have only marginally differing results" (1963:796). They tested

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four techniques designed to reveal community leadership and found that each method revealed a different set of leaders. Reputation and position were the only two methods to agree in more than fifty percent of their nominations and were in substantial agreement in locating leaders (Table 1). When Freeman's indexes of agreement are added, one can conclude that the positional approach is the most likely to discover commonly agreed upon leaders (Table 2).

How these leaders maintain their power and position is dependent upon the sources of power. The major source of power is the organization of society or the control over the avenues of power that social organization provides. Schermerhorn (1961) proposes five basic sources of power:

1. military, police, or criminal power with control over violence
2. economic power with control over land, labor, wealth, or corporate production
3. political power with control over legitimate and ultimate decision-making within a specified territory
4. traditional or ideological power with control over belief and value systems, religion, education, specialized knowledge and propaganda
5. diversionary power with control over hedonic interests, recreation and enjoyments.

This study considers the relationship of women to three of these sources by an analysis of institutionalized power.

> . . . power continues to be the determinant of privilege, but the forms of power change. Force is replaced by institutionalized forms of power as the most useful resource in the struggle between individuals and groups for prestige and privilege (Lenski, 1966:56) . . .

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Institutionalized power is a difficult concept to operationalize. The researcher must necessarily limit his discussion to what appears to be the most important, or at least, the most conspicuous power structures. This paper proposes that on the institutional level, women have failed to gain (or men have refused to relinquish) the power necessary for a change in the stratification system. Millett (1970) contends that the major institutions of society are dominated by men. Males control every avenue of power. In an examination of Millett's contention, we utilize Mills' "power elite" as the frame of reference of institutionalized power.

> By the power elite, we refer to those political, economic, and military circles which as an intricate set of overlapping cliques share decisions having at least national consequences. In so far as national events are decided, the power elite are those who decide them (1957:18).

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DATA COLLECTION

The "power elite" suggested by Mills was examined in this longitudinal study of institutional power. Top hierarchical positions in the U. S. corporate, political, and military structures were analyzed for the years 1958, 1965, and 1972.

In considering corporate power, officers would appear to hold the most powerful positions. Gordon has argued that,

> for the most part, the board of directors (which represents the owners) as a formal group has surrendered its function of active decision-making in the large corporation. "Outside" directors function, if at all, primarily as financial and business advisors. The value of advice by competent and interested directors should not be minimized. But the job of actually making the decisions which are the essence of the leadership function rests primarily with the executives themselves (1961:145-146).

The industrial companies listed by Fortune Magazine as the ten largest in sales and assets* made up the corporate sample (Appendix A). The sample does not include utility and holding companies. A list of each company's officers was obtained from Moody's Industrial Manual. All officers approved by the company board of directors were included. A total of fifteen companies and 1074 positions were examined (the composition of the "top ten" varied from year to year).

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*To qualify for listing as an "industrial" concern, Fortune requires that a company must have derived more than fifty percent of its revenues from manufacturing and/or mining.

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The military portion of the sample included the positions in both the civilian and non-civilian hierarchies specifically mentioned by Mills. These include major positions in the Defense Department and the several branch departments plus the major service commanders as listed in the World Almanac (Appendix B).

Positions in the three branches of the Federal government made the political power sample. Of primary concern were those positions in the executive branch which Mills suggested comprise the political elite.

> A small group of men are now in charge of the executive decisions in the name of the United States of America. These fifty-odd men of the executive branch of the government include the President, the Vice-President, and the members of the cabinet; the head men of the major departments and bureaus, agencies, and commissions, and the members of the executive office of the President, including the White House staff (1957:231).*

We also examined other positions of obvious power in the federal hierarchy: the line of succession to the Presidency; the Supreme Court; and the U. S. Court of Appeals.

This study employed a variety of available documents during the data collection procedure. When the sex of occupants of the various positions was uncertain, names were checked in Who's Who in America, Who Was Who in America, Who's Who of American Women, Who's Who in Commerce and Industry, World's Who's Who in Finance and Industry, and Directory of American Scholars. In instances where sex could not be determined from the above resources, requests for information were sent to the organization. The final sample for all years studied totaled 1687 positions in the various organizations.

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*Due to the difficulty in determining "major" departments and bureaus, and to the variability in their composition during the time period studied, agencies, commissions, etc., were not included in data collection.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Due to the minimal number of females found in the positions examined, a sophisticated data analysis was not possible. The position findings of women within the "power elite" did not change during the period studied. Corporate officers numbered 328 in 1958, 366 in 1965 and 380 in 1972. Women did not occupy any of these positions.

In the civilian hierarchy of the military, sixteen positions for 1958, fifteen for 1965, and twelve for 1972 were examined. The hierarchy did not include women. As of 1972, a woman had not held General, Fleet Admiral, Admiral, or Commandant rank. Recently, we note an exception in the press.

A female has not been in the line of succession to the Presidency from 1958 to the present, although two women have previously held cabinet positions. The White House Office included thirty-two positions in 1958, twenty-seven in 1965, and forty-eight in 1972. Women held the offices of personal secretary and social secretary during each of these years. In 1972, two more females joined the ranks as Staff Director for Ms. Nixon and Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs. Directors for the remaining councils and offices in the Executive Office of the President* included four positions in 1958, seven in 1965, and eleven in 1972. In 1972, a female was the Director of the Office of

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*Excludes offices or councils composed of persons holding another office previously examined.

Consumer Affairs (same position as the Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs). A woman has never been appointed to the Supreme Court (nine positions). The U. S. Court of Appeals with sixty-nine judgeships in 1958, seventy-seven in 1965, and ninety-three in 1972 included one female in the ninth Circuit during 1972.

This study concludes that the "power elite" is sexist. Our hypothesis that the status of women has not perceptably changed with the rise of the new "feminism" was supported. As of 1972, females held powerful positions in neither the economic nor military elite. In the Executive Office of the President, two more females held office in 1972 than in 1958. Controlling for the increase in the number of positions analyzed, this constitutes an increase of one and one-fifth percent. The addition of one female to the U. S. Court of Appeals amounted to a change of one percent. Women are still absent in power positions of several relatively dominant institutions, regardless of what their potential for power might be.

Most studies employ a variety of indexes to determine where a particular group is ranked in the stratification system. We analyzed the ranking of women by the single criterion of power. The index of power as the fundamental basis of the stratification system may be employed in any study of either minority or dominant groups. Its utilization in our research adds weight to the presumption that "power is co-extensive with class and status" (Polsby, 1963:103-104). Previous research has indicated that the indexes of economic, occupational, and educational status show women to hold lower status characteristics. The employment of the power index in this study implies that whatever status index is utilized, results will be similar.

Further study needs to be done on the position of women in the middle levels of power. Such research might be indicative of opportunities for females to enter the higher ranking offices in the near future.

If one is to believe the "You've come a long way, baby" commercials, the Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, etc., one would assume that the status of women has indeed undergone significant change. A study of positional power will reveal the opposite; the role of women in the "power elite" has not perceptably changed with the rise of the new "feminism". Females are indeed, second-class citizens. Perhaps their role is "unchanging".

TABLE 1

Percentage of Agreement in Determining Leaders
by Four Traditional Procedures

Participation	Social Activity	Reputation	Position
25			
33	25		
39	22	74	

Freeman, 1963:796.

TABLE 2

Addition of Indexes of Agreement Among Approaches

Participation	Social Activity	Reputation	Position
25	25	33	39
33	25	25	22
39	22	74	74
97	72	132	135

APPENDIX A

Companies Analyzed by Year

1958

General Motors	Gulf Oil Corporation
Standard Oil, a New Jersey Corp.	Swift and Company
Ford Motor Company	The Texas Company
General Electric Company	E. I. DuPont DeNemours & Co.
United States Steel Corp.	Standard Oil Co. (Indiana)
Socony Mobil Oil Co., Inc.	Standard Oil Co. (California)

1965

General Motors	United States Steel Corp.
Ford Motor Company	Texaco, Inc.
Standard Oil, a New Jersey Corp.	International Business Machines
General Electric Co.	Gulf Oil Corporation
Chrysler Corporation	Standard Oil Co.(California)
Socony Mobil Oil Co., Inc.	

1972

General Motors	Mobil Oil Corporation
Exxon	Texaco, Inc.
Ford Motor Company	International Telephone & Telegraph
General Electric Company	Gulf Oil Corporation
Chrysler Corporation	Standard Oil Co. (California)
International Business Machines	

Notes: The top 10 companies according to sales are listed first, starting with the left hand column, followed by those companies included in the top 10 by assets, but not previously listed.

Standard Oil, a New Jersey Corporation changed its name to Exxon.

APPENDIX B

Major Military Positions

Department of Defense
1958
Secretary of Defense
Deputy Secretary of Defense
Assistants to the Secretary
Atomic Energy
Guided Missiles
Legislative Affairs
Special Operations
Assistant Secretary for
Comptroller
Health and Medicine
International Security Affairs
Manpower Personnel
Property and Installations
Public Affairs
Research and Engineering
Supply and Logistics
General Counsel
Director, Joint Staff
1965
Secretary of Defense
Deputy Secretary of Defense
Director of Defense Research and Engineering
Assistants to Secretary of Defense
Administration
Comptroller
Installations
International Security Affairs
Manpower
Public Affairs
Atomic Energy
Legislative Affairs
Special Assistant to the Secretary
Director, Joint Staff

APPENDIX B (Continued)

1972
- Secretary of Defense
- Deputy Secretary of Defense
- Director of Defense Research and Engineering
- Assistants to Secretary of Defense
  - Administration
  - Comptroller
  - Installations and Logistics
  - International Security Affairs
  - Manpower and Reserve Affairs
  - Public Affairs
  - Systems Analysis
  - Health and Environment
- Director, Joint Staff

Number of Highest Ranking Officers

1958
- Chairman, Joint Chief of Staff
- Army - Chief of Staff
  - Generals of the Army (3)
  - Generals (7)
- Air Force - Chief of Staff
  - Generals (9)
- Navy - Chief of Staff
  - Fleet Admirals (2)
  - Admirals (6)
- Marine Corps - Commandant
  - Generals (2)

1956
- Chairman, Joint Chief of Staff
- Army - Chief of Staff
  - Generals of the Army (2)
  - Generals (12)
- Air Force - Chief of Staff
  - Generals (13)
- Navy - Chief of Naval Operations
  - Fleet Admirals (1)
  - Admirals (6)
- Marine Corps - Commandant
- Coast Guard - Commandant

1972
- Chairman, Joint Chief of Staff
- Army - Chief of Staff
  - Generals of the Army (1)
  - Generals (14)
- Air Force - Chief of Staff
  - Generals (13)
- Navy - Chief of Naval Operations
  - Admirals (9)
- Marine Corps - Commandant
  - Generals (1)
- Coast Guard - Admirals (1)

APPENDIX C

Line of Succession to the Presidency

President
Vice-president
Speaker of the House
President pro tempore of the Senate
Secretary of State
Secretary of the Treasury
Secretary of Defense
Attorney General
Secretary of the Interior
Secretary of Agriculture
Secretary of Commerce
Secretary of Labor
Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development*
Secretary of Transportation*

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*Not yet established in 1958.

APPENDIX D

Positions Analyzed in the Executive Office of the President Excluding the White House Office

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1958

Bureau of the Budget - Director
Council of Economic Advisors - Chairman
Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization - Director
President's Advisory Committee on Government Organization- Chairman

1965

Bureau of the Budget - Director
Council of Economic Advisors - Chairman
Central Intelligence Agency - Director
Office of Economic Opportunity - Director
Office of Emergency Planning - Director
Office of Science and Technology - Director
Office of the Special Representative for Trade Negotiations - Special Representative

1972

Office of Management and Budget - Director
Council of Economic Advisors - Chairman
Central Intelligence Agency - Director
Office of Economic Opportunity - Director
Office of Emergency Preparedness - Director
Office of Science and Technology - Director
Office of the Special Representative for Trade Negotiations- Special Representative
Council on Environmental Quality - Chairman
Office of Telecommunications Policy - Director
Office of Consumer Affairs - Director
Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention - Director

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